

# PUBLIC HEALTH ALERT

20 November 2015 - Page 1 of 2

Regional Public Health  
Better Health For The Greater Wellington Region



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<b>To:</b>	General Practitioners, Pediatricians, ID and General Physicians, Practice Nurses, Pharmacists, After-hours Centers and Emergency Departments in the Wellington and Lower Hutt regions.
<b>From:</b>	Dr Annette Nesdale, Medical Officer of Health
<b>Date:</b>	20 November 2015
<b>Title:</b>	<b>Public Health Alert: Hepatitis A case in Wainuiomata</b>

**Please distribute the following information to relevant staff in your organisation.**

If you would like to receive this by email please advise RPH of your email on [rph@huttvalleydhd.org.nz](mailto:rph@huttvalleydhd.org.nz).

All public health alerts are available at [www.rph.org.nz](http://www.rph.org.nz) (health professionals – public health alerts)

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## Hepatitis A case in Wainuiomata

### Current epidemiology

Regional Public Health (RPH) has been notified of a confirmed case of hepatitis A at Sun Valley Kindergarten in Wainuiomata. RPH is working with the kindergarten staff and parents. At this stage, no obvious source for the infection has been identified.

### Public health follow-up

Kindergarten staff and parents have been advised about the importance of hand hygiene to prevent disease transmission and RPH is offering hepatitis A vaccination to staff and children who attend the kindergarten.

Vaccination will not prevent someone developing the illness if they are already incubating the disease, but is likely to lessen the illness and infectivity. Please advise RPH if a person we have vaccinated develops a hepatitis illness.

Family doctors will be notified of patients who have been vaccinated by RPH. We advise all people who have received the single dose of hepatitis vaccine to have a second dose after 6 to 12 months for life-long protection. The second dose of vaccine is not funded by RPH. We recommend people talk to their family doctor or practice nurse about getting the second dose of hepatitis A vaccine.

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He ture no nga korero katoa kei roto o tenei karere, no reira, kia tupato. Mehemea kaore matau kua e mau. Me whakamohiotia atu ki to Tari, me te mea nana I tonu mai. E Tika Hoki.



## Hepatitis A incubation period

The incubation period for hepatitis A ranges between 15 and 50 days, but is usually around 30 days. The infectious period is two weeks prior to and one week following the development of jaundice. Infants and children may excrete the virus for several months following infection.

## Clinical presentation

*In children:* Hepatitis A usually is usually mild and may only present with non-specific symptoms and signs, such as nausea/vomiting, poor appetite, fever and tiredness. This makes it more difficult to determine the infectious period and increases the risk of disease spread in households and early childhood education centres.

*In adults:* Hepatitis A is usually abrupt with fever, malaise, anorexia, nausea and abdominal discomfort, followed by jaundice within days. There is a spectrum of illness ranging from mild disease that lasts 1-2 weeks, to severe disease that may last several months. No chronic infection is known to occur.

## Be alert for possible cases

We ask that you have a high index of suspicion for hepatitis A, especially in families with young children in Wainuiomata.

## If you suspect a case of hepatitis A please:

- **Notify** suspected cases of hepatitis A during office hours to the RPH notifications line on 04 570 9267, or if after hours, to the on-call medical officer of health on 04 570 9007;
- **Request** hepatitis A IgM serology and LTFs, mark the request "Urgent" and copy to "Medical Officer of Health" at Regional Public Health;
- **Advise** the suspected case to not attend work, social events or gatherings if they are an adult. If a child, advise their parent/guardian their child cannot attend school/kindergarten/playgroup. The ill person should remain away until their illness is diagnosed;
- **Advise** the ill person about the need for effective hand washing, especially after going to the toilet or before/after preparing food;
- **Advise** that the ill person should have their own towel, facecloth, and toothbrush and they should not share these items; and
- **Advise** those who are ill that they should NOT prepare food for other while they are ill, especially if the food is eaten raw.

For more information on hepatitis A, please see the Ministry of Health website:

<https://www.health.govt.nz/your-health/conditions-and-treatments/diseases-and-illnesses/hepatitis>

For more information on the hepatitis A vaccine, please call the Immunisation Advisory Centre free phone number 0800 IMMUNE (0800 466 863) or visit their website: [www.immune.org.nz](http://www.immune.org.nz)